Opening Leader's Next Play

	♠AK103 ♥AQ107 ♦864 ♣93	
♠J8 ♥985 ♦7532 ♣Q1072		♠Q9752 ♥K32 ♦109 ♣AK6
	♠64 ♥J64 ♦AKQJ ♣J854	

Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
	1N(1)	Pass	3N
All pass			

1 12-14

East leads a standard 4th best ♠5→♠4 → ♠J → ♠K. With no card to promote in dummy East knows that partner will have played his highest card (following the old "third hand high" whist rule). That means North has the ace and king of spades and will also hold the ten. Why the ten? Because we play lower of touching honours in defence so West's ♠J denies holding it.

Declarer cross to dummy and runs ♥J (technically, with plenty of entries, a small heart is better - catering for West to holding a singleton or doubleton king of hearts). East wins ♥K and takes stock. He cannot play another spade because that gives declarer a third spade trick. With declarer seeking to set up hearts and dummy holding four diamond tricks our only hope is to find partner with a good club holding. We switch positively to ♣A. Partner encourages (♣2 if "low likes" or ♣7 if high is encouraging). We continue with the other top club and a third club sees dummy's ♣J caught in the jaws of partner's handy queen ten holding.

3N is defeated by one trick. A wooden spade return would have given declarer ten tricks. Note that if you are playing a high card to encourage, West cannot afford to play ♣10. That would have set up the ♣J 8 combination as a stopper for declarer. We learn by knowing *when to switch* and using the technique of *assumption* (as to what we need partner to hold).

	♠9742 ♥KJ9 ♦K543 ♣85	
♠Q105 ♥Q105 ♦AJ107 ♣764		♠AK8 ♥7643 ♦Q86 ♣A92
	♠J63 ♥A82 ♦92 ♣KQJ103	

Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
		1N(1)	All pass

1 12-14

South leads ♣K and declarer ducks for two rounds in an attempt to sever the defence's communication. Now when South plays a third club he has a chance to show partner where his entry is by making *a suit preference play*. He plays ♣3, a low club, indicating that his entry is in a low suit. Clearly, given dummy, this must mean hearts. When East takes a diamond finesse North wins. Because of South's thoughtful play on trick three he is able to lead a heart (♥9) with impunity. South wins and cashes two clubs. When North led back ♥9 that didn't look very encouraging in that suit. Provided North throws away cards discouraging a spade switch partner will get the message and play a heart. The contract will be two off. +100 to North South.

	♠Q98 ♥K8 ♦J943 ♣J1073	
♠32 ♥J976 ♦AKQ5 ♣K65		♠1054 ♥Q10542 ♦82 ♣A92
	♠AKJ76 ♥A3 ♦1076 ♣Q84	

Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
			1♠
X	2♠	All pass	

Holding three trumps to an honour plus a relative shortage makes 2♠ an attractive call for North. Further it is much more preemptive than a 1N bid (which is an option).

West leads three top diamonds. East thinks - perhaps West has a trump winner in which case it'll come naturally. Hearts offer no hope of more than one trick so the contract will only be defeated with tricks in the club suit. On the third diamond East pitches either ♣2 (if "low likes") or ♣9 (if high encourages). West switches dynamically to ♣5 (playing a low card to show interest in the suit). East wins and returns a club and duly receives a club ruff. This is the only defence to beat 2♠.

Note that it's East's power to throw from a suit he wants led that brings success. Playing McKenney-style discards (where we throw from a suit to suggest interest in one of the other suits) doesn't work here.

	♠A5432 ♥7643 ♦97 ♣76	
♠Q109 ♥Q102 ♦AQ6 ♣A432		♠J8 ♥KJ85 ♦KJ104 ♣Q109
	♠K76 ♥A9 ♦8532 ♣KJ85	

Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
1N(1)	Pass	2♣(2)	Pass
2♦	Pass	2N	Pass
3N	All pass		

1 12-14 2 Stayman

Although East has shown interest in at least one major, a reason sometimes to look elsewhere, North will start with a 4th best lead - ♠3 → ♠8 → ♠K → ♠9/10. When South returns ♠7 (high from the remaining doubleton) North should duck West's play of ♠Q (the better card to play generally, an example of *playing the card he's known to hold* [because the earlier king of spades from South denied that card]). This play *maintains communication* between the defensive hands.

Can North be confident that South has a third spade? Yes, because West's 2♦ response to Stayman denied four spades. That puts West with two or three spades and, consequently, partner with four or three respectively. We've *listened to the bidding* and must hope that partner has three spades. With four spades the suit would be blocked and we would only make three tricks there.

So West takes the second spade and plays a heart. South wins and the spade return, from the hoped-for trebleton, ensures defeat for West. A good, thinking defence.

	♠AQ84 ♥AQJ102 ♦105 ♣32	
♠J106 ♥4 ♦K7432 ♣K875		♠5 ♥K9763 ♦AQ86 ♣1064
	♠K9732 ♥85 ♦J9 ♣AQJ9	

Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	4♠(1)
All pass			

1 Slight overbid (and would definitely be so if partner had raised with three card support)

This is an awkward hand to play. West leads ♥4. If the lead if from a singleton declarer should hop up with the ace and, after drawing trumps, will have to hope that East has ♣K (when declarer plays hearts there'll only be two more heart winner on which just two clubs can be thrown).

If the lead is anything but a singleton then there are always ten tricks (or more) since all three club losers can be discarded on heart winners. Let's say declarer takes this path. Wrong! East wins and knows West has led a singleton (depending on which card South plays at trick one, West would not have led ♥4 from ♥5 4 or from ♥8 4). East knows to switch to ♥9. This is a *suit preference signal*, the play of a high card to indicate an entry in the higher-ranking side suit (diamonds). These defences can become difficult and the best defence now sees West cash ♦K (encouraged by East's interest in the suit) before playing a second diamond. When East plays another heart South should ruff high and draw the trumps. If he ruffs low he'll be overruffed and will, with the club finesse losing, finish an undistinguished three down.

♠AK109854 ♥2 ♦Q109 ♣A8 ♠32 ♠Q ♥J743 ♥A10985 ♦A83 ♦KJ42 ♣10542 ♣QJ3 ♠J76 ♥KQ6 ♦765 ♣K976	Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** 1♥ Pass 2♥ 4♠ All pass East has a non-obvious lead and his fingers may fall on ♥A. That, at least, gives him a sight of dummy and that's very useful here. With dummy indicating that the defence has no future in hearts West can use this as an opportunity to make a *suit preference signal*. He plays ♥J on the opening lead. This obviously-high card says that West is interested in the higher of the two side suits, diamonds. East, who would normally be afraid of leading away from a king, switches at trick two to ♦2. West rises with the ace and returns a diamond (East's low card switch has already shown interest in the diamond suit). Now the defence is able to take a winning diamond finesse in defence. The contract fails by one trick with East West taking the ace of hearts and three diamonds. Any other sequence of cards would see declarer home (with an overtrick too on a major suit or club switch).
♠K753 ♥652 ♦3 ♣KJ654 ♠986 ♠AQ4 ♥AQ7 ♥KJ1094 ♦K1062 ♦QJ95 ♣Q102 ♣9 ♠J102 ♥83 ♦A874 ♣A873	Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** Pass Pass Pass 1♥ Pass 2♦ Pass 3♦ Pass 3♥ Pass 4♥ X All pass South has had a good breakfast and the senses are on full alert. The visual antennae have seen the opponents bid and support diamonds, placing both East and West with four cards in the suit. How many diamonds does partner have? At most one. South can play the defence before the dummy's been exposed. It'll be ♦A followed by a suit preference ♦4, indicating an entry in clubs. North will duly return a club and receive a second diamond ruff. Note that with ♦2 in dummy and North holding ♦3 there can never be any ambiguity about the meaning of South's four of diamonds. It's known to be the lowest diamond South holds. South has *listened to the bidding* and that's +500 for the partnership, seemingly out of thin air (declarer can take a winning spade finesse but will always lose one spade). If North never receives a diamond ruff the contract makes – two spades, five hearts and three diamonds.

♠Q10872 ♥KJ94 ♦A4 ♣82 ♠AK6 ♠J5 ♥10865 ♥Q7 ♦K5 ♦QJ10963 ♣KJ105 ♣AQ9 ♠943 ♥A32 ♦872 ♣7643	Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** 1N(1) Pass(2) 3N Pass 1 12-14 2 Intrepid/foolhardy Norths may venture a light 2♣ (Landy, showing both majors) North gets off to the normal, but unfortunate, lead of a low spade. West calls for ♠J which holds. He plays a diamond ♦3 → ♦2 (giving count) → ♦K → ♦A. There's no point North holding up the diamond ace as there's always a club entry to dummy. North considers the situation. With partner unable to cover dummy's knave of spades, West is marked with both ♠A and ♠K. We can count declarer's winners if we make a neutral return – three spades, five diamonds and a club. That's contract made, so we need to find a switch to the only non-neutral suit, hearts. If declarer has ♥A, that's a tenth trick for the "oppos". So we must make an assumption that partner holds that card. We'll switch to a heart but which one? Say we play a low one. Partner will win and return the suit. Now we'll have to play ♥J and another heart. If declarer had been dealt four hearts, including ♥10, we'll end up giving West a trick with this card. Somewhat ignominious. No, the winning play is to lead ♥K! We continue with a second heart and now we make two more heart tricks irrespective of who holds ♥10. We either have another finesse in defence (see boards 1 & 6); or declarer had it in a doubleton/trebleton holding so that it falls; or partner was dealt it anyway. Foolproof. Another hand (see board 1 too) where we've defended by *knowing when to switch* and using the power of *assumption*.